AN

# ESSAY

ON

# VALOUR:

OCCASIONED

By the perusal of some Reflections on VALOUR, in an excellent Performance lately published under the Title of "A View of the internal Evidence of the Christian Religion, &c. by SOAME JENYNS, Esq."

*Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*

1 Cor. chap. vii. ver. 20.

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# AN ESSAY ON VALOUR.

VALOUR is no more than an extraordinary exertion or degree of courage; like vigour is an extraordinary exertion or degree of ſtrength.

Suppoſing this definition to be true, whatever is applicable to cou-

rage, will be no leſs ſo to valour, except in point of magnitude.

Let us therefore conſider what courage is.

Courage is one of the ingredients in the compoſition of human nature without which it cannot be perfect.

It is either conſtitutional, or acquired.

When conſtitutional, it is a natural endowment in oppoſition to timidity, which is a natural defect; as ſuch, it has indeed no more merit than ſome other natural endowments,

dowments, ſuch as vigour, agility, ſagacity, genius, wit, &c. all which may be employed by the poſſeſſor of them to good or bad purpoſes; and conſequently be made beneficial or detrimental to himſelf as well as to any ſociety he may belong to, whether military, civil, or religious.

When acquired, it is not only for the ſame reaſon, either a good or a bad acquiſition, according to the uſe or abuſe made of it, but a virtue, or a vice, or the offspring of either, according to the motives from which it ariſes.

That conſtitutional courage has no moral merit of itſelf, is a ſelf-evident propoſition; but that an acquired one, is a virtue, or a vice, or the offspring of either, may deſerve ſome illuſtration.

Let us therefore ſuppoſe on the one hand, a ſoldier conſtitutionally timid, who, from a pure, ſound, and ſtrong ſenſe of his duty, conquers his timidity by reflection and reſolution, and acts with perſevering bravery; his courage thus acquired and exerted, becomes certainly a virtue, full as much as the chaſtity of a perſon whoſe conſtitution is a warm one. On the other hand, let us

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ſuppoſe a baſe profligate fellow, of the ſame timid diſpoſition with the ſoldier, who aſſociates with a gang of footpads, or highwaymen, and from a ſtrong deſire of emulating his companions, works himſelf up into a ſort of frantic bravery; his courage will be a vice ſimilar to the warm deſire of a perſon of a cold conſtitution.

Let us alſo ſuppoſe that the ſame ſoldier being deſirous, from a mere principle of humanity, to engage with others in a meritorious, but very dangerous enterprize, (ſuch as reſcuing ſome women or children out of the hands of a

ſtrong

ſtrong and cruel enemy;) and for that purpoſe has uſed with ſucceſs ſome ſpirituous liquor, or other incentive, to conquer ſome effect, or return of his conſtitutional timidity; his courage, in this caſe, though no virtue of itſelf will be the offspring of one, viz. his humanity. Let us there againſt ſuppoſe that the profligate has no leſs vanity than timidity in his compoſition; and that, being ſtimulated by the one to enter upon a meritorious act of bravery, he has recourſe to his bottle to get the better of the other; and that he has the good luck to ſucceed in it; his courage, though no vice of

of itſelf, will be the offspring of one; viz. his vanity.

Now let us conſider whether courage is incompatible with Chriſtianity; or whether it is not a neceſſary, or at leaſt a deſirable ingredient in the conſtitution of a Chriſtian, full as much as in that of any other man.

As a natural endowment it is ſo far from being incompatible with Chriſtianity, that it can be made, and, has been made, in many inſtances, more or leſs ſubſervient to the ſupport and propagation of it; full as much as genius, ſagacity,

city, and all other ſimilar endowments of mind or body. Beſides the exertion of it, in a voluntary defiance, and ſuffering of pain and death; let us ſuppoſe, for inſtance, that a true Chriſtian miſſionary (if ſtill ſuch there are) amongſt ſavages, has the happineſs to be endowed, not only with ſtrength and dexterity, but alſo with an extraordinary ſhare of conſtitutional courage, which enables him to ingratiate himſelf with one of their chiefs, by aſſiſting him in the hunt of wild beaſts, and the deſtruction of ferocious animals; and that by this means he acquires his confidence, and afterwards makes

him

him a convert to Chriſtianity: Will this natural endowment be incompatible with, or ſubſervient to it? the anſwer is obvious.

As to the acquiſition of this endowment where nature has denied it, a true Chriſtian will ſtand a better chance for it, than any other individual of the human race: His elevation of mind, and his contempt of death, from a firm reliance on the protection, and a voluntary reſignation to the will of God, will be the principles of his courage, and make it a Chriſtian virtue; of which the activity (from a concurrence of his other virtues ſuch as

humility,

humility, charity, &c.) will always be a proper one, and tend to a salutary end.

Whatever I have said of courage is applicable to valour (though in a higher degree) according to my definition of it.

Thus far then I have presumed to give my own ideas on valour. Now let us see what the author of "A View of the internal Evidence of the Christian Religion" makes of it.* He calls it active courage in opposition to passive courage. I must confess that I cannot form any distinct idea of active no more than of passive courage,

* Page 53—57.

courage, and I really believe them to be both of his own creation; for valour, as well as courage, is of itſelf neither paſſive or active; no more than vigour, agility, ſagacity, &c. When its poſſeſſor does not exert it, it is merely at reſt, juſt as his vigour or agility when he ſits ſtill or lies down. It muſt be put in motion, and have a ſubject to work upon. The mover muſt be one of his paſſions, either good or bad, and the ſubject a proper or improper one. Inſtead of which, our author, after making it act of itſelf, makes it the perpetrator of all the miſchiefs that ariſe from violence. He then reduces it to a

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mere engine, ſolely employed for bad purpoſes by wicked men; or by pagans and unbelievers to gratify their paſſions, or falſe virtues: Notwithſtanding which he ſeems to doubt whether, on ſome few occaſions, it may not be exerted by Chriſtians: he goes even further, and ſays at the bottom of his next page, that he does not object to the praiſe and honours beſtowed on the valiant; and that they are the leaſt tribute which can be paid them, by thoſe who enjoy ſafety, and affluence, by the intervention of their dangers, and ſufferings. How ſuch an excellent convert to Chriſtianity, as our author appears to be, can

concur

concur in beſtowing rewards for the exertion of a courage, which he not only aſſerts immediately after, that a Chriſtian can have nothing to do with, but which he ſays in his next page, to be the offſpring of pride and revenge, and the parent of cruelty and injuſtice, paſſes my comprehenſion: as I have hitherto been made to believe that an encourager of thoſe, who act from pride and revenge, and commit cruelties and injuſtice, is nearly as guilty as themſelves: and a receiver of ſtolen goods no leſs ſo than the thief who ſteals them. I therefore leave the ſolution of this problem to himſelf. In the mean while

he has been pleaſed to introduce an opponent to his valour, or active courage, under the denomination of paſſive courage, and this at the expence of two Chriſtian virtues, patience and reſignation, whereby both theſe dwindle away under his pen into the mere reſolution of a philoſopher, whilſt he works up his active courage into the ferocity of a ſavage.

I beg his pardon for the ludicrous turn of this little abſtract of his Diſſertation on Valour. If he will take the trouble of comparing the one with the other, he will perhaps not be ſurpriſed at my having

having been betrayed into this ſort of criticiſm; in ſpite of my high regard for the main point he has in view, as well as for his ingenious, and maſterly purſuit of it, throughout a performance, which does him ſo much honour, and ſo deſervedly. I could therefore, almoſt wiſh, that thoſe moral precepts, which he conſiders as founded on falſe principles, had been omitted in it; *as judiciouſly* as they appear to himſelf to have been omitted in the New Teſtament; not in my opinion, on account of their being, as he ſays, totally incompatible with the genius and ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion, but becauſe they were already a-

dopted by the generality of mankind; and wanted only to be rectified, and reduced to their intrinſic merit, by the ſuperior influence of thoſe ſacred virtues, which conſtitute the excellence of the Chriſtian religion.

I could prove that patriotiſm and friendſhip have been injured as well as valour, by the light in which he has been pleaſed to place them. But I could heartily wiſh that his own pen, ſo ſuperior to mine, would ſave me this trouble, by reviſing and correcting his excellent performance in a future edition of it; when he will perhaps

haps perceive that it is ſtill ſuſ-ceptible of being made much more inſtrumental to the converſion of unbelievers, than it is at preſent.

I ſhall now conclude my little eſſay, and critical remarks, with giving our author's paſſive courage, as well as his active one, the beſt meaning I can; and try, whether, even then, either of them can anſwer his purpoſe. If I do not hit it, I muſt beg the favour of him to ſet me right, and to tell his readers himſelf what he means to expreſs by them.

In the mean while I ſhall beg his leave to take it for granted,

that by paſſive courage he means to expreſs, not only patience and reſignation, but that reſolution, and fortitude of mind, by which we are enabled to encounter the moſt eminent dangers; and to ſuffer the infliction of the moſt cruel pains and deaths, without either fear or reſiſtance, and even with chearfulneſs and alacrity.

If this is to be called courage, it muſt be ſupreme courage, as being ſuperior not only to valour but to intrepidity, and every other ſort or degree of courage: But ſtill it will be courage, and muſt be put in motion by good or bad paſſions,

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and exerted for good or bad purpoſes. If not, it will be at reſt, but ſo far from paſſive, that, by a full exertion of it, it will ſubdue all our other paſſions in behalf of its mover, and be ſolely employed, in baffling the attempts of whatever enemy we have to encounter, in purſuit of the object we may have in view.

In this active manner it was exerted by St. Stephen, and many other Chriſtian martyrs, from the beſt of motives, and for the beſt of purpoſes. Their paſſions were ſanctified, one of them was their ſtrong deſire of converting people to Chriſtianity,

tianity, not by the ſword, but by their exhortations and examples; and therefore to have recourſe, not to the exertion of military valour, (of which ſome of them were not deſtitute) but to that of a courage ſuperior to all others, the poſſeſſors of which are thereby enabled, not only to conquer the natural effects of pain and death upon themſelves, but to deprive their enemies of the object they have in view, and conſequently to obtain a compleat victory over them,

As their exertion of this courage was in conſequence of a divine miſſion, they were often ſupported in

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it by viſions, and other ſupernatural aſſiſtance: But that this courage, though ſuperior to all others, is ſtill of itſelf either conſtitutional, or acquired from different motives, and by different means, is ſufficiently ſhewn in the hiſtory of mankind. The Romans had a Regulus who exerted this courage in as active a manner, and as vigouroufly as any Chriſtian martyr could do, but from very different motives, and for a very different purpoſe. His courage of this ſuperior ſtamp, took its riſe from miſtaken patriotiſm, vain glory and thirſt after fame; and was exerted for the purpoſe of prolonging a moſt cruel war, in favour of his country's

country's unjuſt, and extravagant ambition of becoming ſole miſtreſs of the world.

Thus I preſume to have ſhewn, that our author's paſſive courage is totally inexpreſſive of the only good meaning it can have, unleſs it be ſuch a one as I cannot find out, nor I believe any other of his readers.

His active courage is no leſs unfortunate; I will ſhew, by my endeavours to find out the meaning of it, that men of genius are often liable to let their imagination run away with their judgment, in coining words, and uſing expreſſions, which

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muſt remain upon their hands, for want of intrinſic value as well as of currency.

I will therefore ſuppoſe that when he calls valour, active courage, he means violence, or military valour. If violence, it is ſuch a miſnomer as cannot be juſtified. If military valour or courage, it will ſtill be courage or valour, exerted in a peculiar manner and like all other courage, from good or bad motives, and to good or bad purpoſes. The profeſſion of it, is one of thoſe callings by which men of different claſſes obtain a livelyhood; and ſome of them affluence

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and honours, according to their rank or merit: at leaſt this is what it ought to be.

The Centurion, in whom Chriſt found more faith than in all Iſrael, was of this profeſſion; and we do not find that our Saviour bade him renounce it. The other Centurion, in whoſe behalf St. Peter was inſtructed by a viſion, was even before his converſion to Chriſtianity, a devout man, who feared God with all his houſe; gave alms, and prayed conſtantly. St. Paul was a tent-maker, and would probably have renounced his calling, as ſubſervient to the military one, if he had looked

looked upon this as incompatible with Chriſtianity. If military courage, as well as the profeſſion of it, is uſually the perpetrator (as our author aſſerts) of all the violences, which from retaliated injuries diſtract the world with bloodſhed and devaſtation; it is owing to the perverſity of human nature, by which it is abuſed. When not, it is the preſervator of that peace, order, and happineſs in ſociety, of which our author repreſents it to be deſtructive. As an engine it can be employed for the protection of the weak, againſt the ſtrong; of the humble againſt the proud; and of the innocent againſt the guilty.

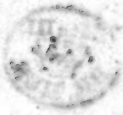
guilty. If it is the chief inſtrument which ambition employs in her unjuſt purſuits of wealth and power; it is not leſs ſo in the hands of juſtice, to check her in her career, and chaſtiſe her for it.

That Chriſtians in their private capacities are not to inflict evil, or revenge injuries, I readily aſſent to; but in which ſenſe they are not to reſiſt the firſt; or on what condition they are to forgive the others, is a ſubject which I leave to abler pens than my own, and to more enlighten'd Chriſtians than myſelf, to diſcuſs and aſcertain; but this I will venture to aſſert, that when even all Chriſtian

nations

nations ſhould become nations of Chriſtians, as our author ſo elegantly expreſſes it, there would ſtill be room for the exertion of military valour, not only againſt ferocious animals, but againſt nations of fanaticks and pirates; and as long as there ſhould remain one villain upon the face of the earth, he might find means to reduce a chriſtian individual, to the neceſſity of exerting his courage in a military way: Unleſs it were demonſtrated that the ſovereigns of nations, compoſed of none but true Chriſtians, would not be obliged to protect and defend their people; or that mere ſelf-defence is as repugnant to the true ſpirt of our

Saviour's

Saviour's doctrine, as to the indiſcriminate application of ſome paſſages in that ſacred book, by which it has been tranſmitted to us, and I hope to our poſterity.

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